

Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated.

Our Flex Day Staff Development Program was developed with three objectives in mind: 1.) to provide quality staff development in a cost effective manner; 2.) to increase course offerings in technology in the special education and content specific areas; 3.) to provide opportunities to showcase the expertise of our staff.

During the year if staff agrees to attend 12 hours of staff development for no remuneration or credit, they will receive 2 compensatory days - the Friday before President's Day and the Friday before Memorial Day. If they do not attend courses during the year, they report to work on those Fridays and participate in an in-service program.

As a result of this program, over 450 staff members have taken advantage of the 80 course array, taught by district staff and administrators, offered from 3:45 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. October through April. Staff presenters receive a \$54.60 per hour stipend, and administrators receive 1 compensatory day for each 6 hour course taught. Our presenters include teachers from numerous subject areas: math, English, social studies, reading and technology, as well as Supervisors, Directors, Principals and Assistant Superintendents. Teachers from all grade levels and all subject areas, as well as non-certified personnel, participate together in 3, 6 or 12 hour teacher-designed courses which support our district mission and initiatives. Another innovative piece to our Flex Day Program is our study groups. In these courses teachers and staff meet to read and discuss books, articles, etc. around a theme. This year we have 5 study groups meeting for a total of 9 hours each group: The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Magic Trees of the Mind, Peer Coaching in Social Studies, Using Guided Reading Techniques in a Kindergarten, The Wolf Gang: The Mozart Effect.

As a last piece to Flex Day, to assist the presenters in teaching adult learners, we offer a 3 hour "Train the Trainers" course. In this course we examine ways to "chunk" the course information, to create activities to stimulate the adult learner and to discuss any problems the presenters might face.

Our program is innovative for a number of reasons:

- Cost effectiveness. For approximately \$18,000 we are able to provide 5,400 hours of staff development to 450 people.
- Participation is extremely high. Only 2 people will participate in the in-service courses on February 12, 1999, and May 28, 1999.
- This program includes all our staff: administrators, teachers, secretaries, clerks and aides taught almost exclusively by our own staff.

As a result of our Flex Day Program teachers are learning interactive, hands-on strategies to use in the classroom. When these strategies are implemented, students achieve more and learn more.

Replication is not difficult. A district would need: 1.) interested staff willing to share their expertise; 2.) a coordinator/staff developer; 3.) Board of Education support and funding; 4.) teacher association support; 5.) a willingness on everyone's part to be risk-takers and innovators.

Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses and how they were identified. List the *Core Curriculum content and/or Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards** that the practice addresses.

Because we know so much more how the brain learns (therefore, how students learn) we have adjusted and adapted our teaching to a more constructivistic, hands-on, student-centered approach. Students need to be active learners in their education, and teachers need to use interactive strategies and techniques to meet the educational needs of students. Our Flex Day Program provides teachers with generic as well as content-specific techniques to teach the student of today.

Because our staff development courses are researched-based and reflect the current thinking in brain-compatible learning, our teachers learn how to address the individual learning styles of students.

As we examine Gardner's Eight Intelligences, Gregorc's four Mind Styles, Jensen's Brain-Based learning, self-esteem, gender equity, inclusive education or Kagan's Cooperative Learning, to name a few, we teach our staff to create and incorporate into their content lessons, strategies to make students active participants in the learning process.

We know students must not only actively construct meaning and make sense of the information they receive daily, but also need to learn skills and apply concepts they extract from the classroom. In our staff development courses we discuss theory as well as application to the classroom. We also provide time for teachers to create and/or integrate strategies into lessons that they will utilize in the near future.

Because of the variety of courses taught in all content areas, we address the Core Curriculum Content Standards and the Cross Content Workplace Readiness Standards. For illustration purposes, we have listed a sampling of the staff development courses and the standard it connects with:

Adult CPR and First Aid; New Ideas in Physical Education; Especially for Coaches: Coaches' Safety Class	} Comprehensive Health and Physical Education
Creating a Motivational Learning Environment with Music; Multiple Intelligences	} Visual and Performing Arts
Guided Reading; Literature Circles LA Roundtable K-12	} Language Arts Literacy }
Touchmath; Examining the TIMSS Eighth Grade Mathematic Video Tapes;	} Mathematics }
RST ² Meteorology; Linking Assessment to Instruction in Science/Math	} Science }
Peer Coaching in Social Studies	} Social Studies

Everything You Wanted to Know
About Hispanic Countries

} World Languages

All our technology courses, from beginner to advanced, address the Cross Content Workplace Readiness Standard #2 on technology, information and other tools. In addition, the concepts our teachers learn from such courses as: School Wide Behavior Plan and Behavior Management Techniques can be translated to their students to focus on standard #4 "all students will demonstrate self-management skills."

Because we stress theory and practice in our courses with classroom application focusing on students' critical thinking, decision-making and problem-solving as in Facilitation of Problem Solving/Self-Esteem Workshops for Middle School Students, Standard #3 is constantly addressed.

Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met.

For our Flex Day staff development courses there is much evidence to indicate our success. First, feedback from teachers, both written and oral, is most positive. Even after a long day of teaching and attending staff development until 7:00 P.M., teachers have made such comments as: "I look forward to developing some of these ideas and lessons...I learned a lot and enjoyed it...This was a great course...I built my confidence...The information can be used in my class right away."

This positive feedback spread by teachers is one of the best indicators that our courses have benefited students in the classroom. Our waiting lists for courses grow each day.

Secondly, teachers have sent examples of projects, assignments and student responses to the ideas and strategies that they have used in the classroom after attending staff development courses. The change in their students amaze them. Enthusiasm for learning, a more positive classroom attitude and higher achievement are important student outcomes as a result of our staff development program.

Thirdly, follow-up visits into the classroom provide more evidence that knowledge gained at staff development workshops is being implemented to help students learn more effectively.

Because our flex-day program was created as a result of teacher requests for training, specifically in the areas of technology and special education, the feedback in these areas is most positive. Teachers feel better equipped with technical knowledge and educational strategies which they know will increase student learning.

Our teachers can now be seen in the computer labs practicing their own skills. They are also bringing their classes to the computer labs with less trepidation and fear of technology.

Coupled with follow-up visits into the classrooms, we can readily observe the implementation of strategies and can see the beneficial results in more hands-on, active, student-centered lessons utilizing technology.

Finally, through the use of Professional Improvement Plans, teachers and administrators can see evidence and growth of both the teacher and his/her students.